



# The Scramble for Africa

## MAIN IDEA

**EMPIRE BUILDING** Ignoring the claims of African ethnic groups, kingdoms, and city-states, Europeans established colonies.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

African nations continue to feel the effects of the colonial presence more than 100 years later.

## TERMS & NAMES

- imperialism
- racism
- Social Darwinism
- Berlin Conference
- Shaka
- Boer
- Boer War

**SETTING THE STAGE** Industrialization stirred ambitions in many European nations. They wanted more resources to fuel their industrial production. They competed for new markets for their goods. Many nations looked to Africa as a source of raw materials and as a market for industrial products. As a result, colonial powers seized vast areas of Africa during the 19th and early 20th centuries. This seizure of a country or territory by a stronger country is called **imperialism**. As occurred throughout most of Africa, stronger countries dominated the political, economic, and social life of the weaker countries.

## Africa Before European Domination

In the mid-1800s, on the eve of the European domination of Africa, African peoples were divided into hundreds of ethnic and linguistic groups. Most continued to follow traditional beliefs, while others converted to Islam or Christianity. These groups spoke more than 1,000 different languages. Politically, they ranged from large empires that united many ethnic groups to independent villages.

Europeans had established contacts with sub-Saharan Africans as early as the 1450s. However, powerful African armies were able to keep the Europeans out of most of Africa for 400 years. In fact, as late as 1880, Europeans controlled only 10 percent of the continent's land, mainly on the coast.

Furthermore, European travel into the interior on a large-scale basis was virtually impossible. Europeans could not navigate African rivers, which had many rapids, cataracts, and changing flows. The introduction of steam-powered riverboats in the early 1800s allowed Europeans to conduct major expeditions into the interior of Africa. Disease also discouraged European exploration.

Finally, Africans controlled their own trade networks and provided the trade items. These networks were specialized. The Chokwe, for example, devoted themselves to collecting ivory and beeswax in the Angolan highlands.

**Nations Compete for Overseas Empires** Those Europeans who did penetrate the interior of Africa were explorers, missionaries, or humanitarians who opposed the European and American slave trade. Europeans and Americans learned about Africa through travel books and newspapers. These publications competed for readers by hiring reporters to search the globe for stories of adventure, mystery, or excitement.

## TAKING NOTES

**Outlining** Use an outline to list the forces and events surrounding imperialism in Africa.

*The Scramble for Africa*

- I. Africa Before European Domination
  - A.
  - B.
- II. Forces Driving Imperialism



▲ This stamp celebrates the centenary (100th) anniversary of Stanley and Livingstone's meeting in 1871.

**The Congo Sparks Interest** In the late 1860s, David Livingstone, a missionary from Scotland, traveled with a group of Africans deep into central Africa to promote Christianity. When several years passed with no word from him or his party, many people feared he was dead. An American newspaper hired reporter Henry Stanley to find Livingstone. In 1871, he found Dr. Livingstone on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. Stanley's famous greeting—"Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"—made headlines around the world.

Stanley set out to explore Africa himself and trace the course of the Congo River. His explorations sparked the interest of King Leopold II of Belgium, who commissioned Stanley to help him obtain land in the Congo. Between 1879 and 1882, Stanley signed treaties with local chiefs of the Congo River valley. The treaties gave King Leopold II of Belgium control of these lands.

Leopold claimed that his primary motive in establishing the colony was to abolish the slave trade and promote Christianity. However, he licensed companies that brutally exploited Africans by forcing them to collect sap from rubber plants. At least 10 million Congolese died due to the abuses inflicted during Leopold's rule. As a result of his cruelty, humanitarians around the world demanded changes. In 1908, the Belgian government took control of the colony away from Leopold. The Belgian Congo, as the colony later became known, was 80 times larger than Belgium. The Belgian government's seizure of the Congo alarmed France. Earlier, in 1882, the French had approved a treaty that gave France the north bank of the Congo River. Soon Britain, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Spain were also claiming parts of Africa.

## Forces Driving Imperialism

The motives that drove colonization in Africa were also at work in other lands. Similar economic, political, and social forces accelerated the drive to take over land in all parts of the globe. The Industrial Revolution in particular provided European countries with a reason to add lands to their control. As European nations industrialized, they searched for new markets and raw materials to improve their economies.

**Belief in European Superiority** The race for colonies also grew out of a strong sense of national pride. Europeans viewed an empire as a measure of national greatness. As the competition for colonies intensified, each country was determined to plant its flag on as much of the world as possible.

Many Europeans believed that they were better than other peoples. The belief that one race is superior to others is called **racism**. The attitude was a reflection of **Social Darwinism**, a social theory of the time. In this theory, Charles Darwin's ideas about evolution and "survival of the fittest" were applied to human society. Those who were fittest for survival enjoyed wealth and success and were considered superior to others. According to the theory, non-Europeans were considered to be on a lower scale of cultural and physical development because they had not made the scientific and technological progress that Europeans had. Europeans believed that they had the right and the duty to bring the results of their progress to other countries. Cecil Rhodes, a successful businessman and a major supporter of British expansion, clearly stated this position:

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Analyzing Primary Sources

**A** What attitude about the British does Rhodes's statement display?

#### PRIMARY SOURCE **A**

I contend that we [Britons] are the first race in the world, and the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race. . . . It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory and we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes that more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race, more of the best, the most human, most honourable race the world possesses.

**CECIL RHODES**, *Confession of Faith*, 1877



▲ Rhodes's De Beers Consolidated Mines is the biggest diamond company in the world today.

The push for expansion also came from missionaries who worked to convert the peoples of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific Islands to Christianity. Many missionaries believed that European rule was the best way to end evil practices such as the slave trade. They also wanted to "civilize," that is, to "Westernize," the peoples of the foreign land.

**Factors Promoting Imperialism in Africa** Several factors contributed to the Europeans' conquest of Africa. One overwhelming advantage was the Europeans' technological superiority. The Maxim gun, invented in 1884, was the world's first automatic machine gun. European countries quickly acquired the Maxim, while the resisting Africans were forced to rely on outdated weapons.

European countries also had the means to control their empire. The invention of the steam engine allowed Europeans to easily travel on rivers to establish bases of control deep in the African continent. Railroads, cables, and steamships allowed close communications within a colony and between the colony and its controlling nation.

Even with superior arms and steam engines to transport them, another factor might have kept Europeans confined to the coast. They were highly susceptible to malaria, a disease carried by the dense swarms of mosquitoes in Africa's interior. The perfection of the drug quinine in 1829 eventually protected Europeans from becoming infected with this disease.

Factors within Africa also made the continent easier for Europeans to colonize. Africans' huge variety of languages and cultures discouraged unity among them. Wars fought between ethnic groups over land, water, and trade rights also prevented a unified stand. Europeans soon learned to play rival groups against each other.

## The Division of Africa

The scramble for African territory had begun in earnest about 1880. At that time, the French began to expand from the West African coast toward western Sudan. The discoveries of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886 in South Africa increased European interest in colonizing the continent. No European power wanted to be left out of the race.

#### Vocabulary

*scramble*: a frantic struggle to obtain something. The word is frequently used to describe the competition for African land.

**Berlin Conference Divides Africa** The competition was so fierce that European countries feared war among themselves. To prevent conflict, 14 European nations met at the **Berlin Conference** in 1884–85 to lay down rules for the division of Africa. They agreed that any European country could claim land in Africa by notifying other nations of its claims and showing it could control the area. The European nations divided the continent with little thought about how African ethnic or linguistic groups were distributed. No African ruler was invited to attend these meetings, yet the conference sealed Africa's fate. By 1914, only Liberia and Ethiopia remained free from European control. **B**

**Demand for Raw Materials Shapes Colonies** When European countries began colonizing, many believed that Africans would soon be buying European goods in great quantities. They were wrong; few Africans bought European goods. However, European businesses still needed raw materials from Africa. The major source of great wealth in Africa proved to be the continent's rich mineral resources. The Belgian Congo contained untold wealth in copper and tin. Even these riches seemed small compared with the gold and diamonds in South Africa.

Businesses eventually developed cash-crop plantations to grow peanuts, palm oil, cocoa, and rubber. These products displaced the food crops grown by farmers to feed their families.

## Three Groups Clash over South Africa

South Africa demonstrated the impact that Europeans had on African peoples. The history of South Africa is a history of Africans, Dutch, and British clashing over land and resources. Although the African lands seemed empty to the Europeans, various ethnic groups had competing claims over huge areas. The local control of these lands, especially in the east, had been in dispute for about 100 years.

**Zulus Fight the British** From the late 1700s to the late 1800s, a series of local wars shook southern Africa. Around 1816, a Zulu chief, **Shaka**, used highly disciplined warriors and good military organization to create a large centralized state.

Shaka's successors, however, were unable to keep the kingdom together against the superior arms of the British invaders. In 1879, after Zulu king Cetshwayo refused to dismiss his army and accept British rule, the British invaded the Zulu nation. Although the Zulus used spears and shields against British guns, they nearly defeated the great European army. In July 1879, however, the Zulus lost the Battle of Ulundi and their kingdom. The Zulu nation fell to British control in 1887.

**Boers and British Settle in the Cape** The first Europeans to settle in South Africa had been the Dutch. The Dutch came to the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 to establish a way station for their ships sailing between the Dutch East Indies and the Netherlands. Dutch settlers known as **Boers** (Dutch for "farmers") gradually took Africans' land and established large farms. (The Boers are also known as Afrikaners.) When the British took over the Cape Colony permanently in the early 1800s, they and the Boers clashed over British policy regarding land and slaves.

▼ Reinstated as ruler over part of his former nation, King Cetshwayo was soon driven away and died in exile in 1884.



### MAIN IDEA

#### Clarifying

**B** What was the purpose of the Berlin Conference?



## Imperialism in Africa, 1913

INTERACTIVE



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- Region** How does imperialism in Africa in 1878 compare with that in 1913?
- Region** What does the map of ethnic boundaries suggest about the number of ethnic groups in Africa in 1913?

## History *in* Depth



### Winston Churchill and the Boer War

Winston Churchill, who served as the British prime minister during World War II, first came to public attention during the Boer War.

A war correspondent, Churchill was traveling with British soldiers when their train was ambushed by the Boers. Churchill pulled some of the wounded men to safety. When he returned to help the others, however, he was arrested by a Boer soldier. (The soldier, Louis Botha, would later become the prime minister of the Union of South Africa and Churchill's close friend.)

Churchill managed to escape from the South African prison. When he returned to Britain, Churchill was hailed as a national hero at the age of 26.

In the 1830s, to escape the British, several thousand Boers began to move north. This movement has become known as the Great Trek. The Boers soon found themselves fighting fiercely with Zulu and other African groups whose land they were taking.

**The Boer War** Diamonds and gold were discovered in southern Africa in the 1860s and 1880s. Suddenly, adventurers from all parts of the world rushed in to make their fortunes. The Boers tried to keep these “outsiders” from gaining political rights. An attempt to start a rebellion against the Boers failed. The Boers blamed the British and, in 1899, took up arms against them.

In many ways, the **Boer War** (also known as the South African War) between the British and the Boers was the first modern “total” war. The Boers launched commando raids and used guerrilla tactics against the British. The British countered by burning Boer farms and imprisoning women and children in disease-ridden concentration camps.

Black South Africans were also involved in the war. Some fought; others served as scouts, guards, drivers, and workers. Many black South Africans were captured by the British and placed in concentration camps, where over 14,000 died.

Britain finally won the war. In 1910, the Boer republics were joined into a self-governing Union of South Africa, which was controlled by the British. **C**

The establishing of colonies signaled a change in the way of life of the Africans. The Europeans made efforts to change the political, social, and economic lives of the peoples they conquered. You will learn about these changes in Section 2.

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Contrasting

**C** How was the struggle for land in the Boer War different from other takeovers in Africa?

## SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

**TERMS & NAMES** 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- imperialism
- racism
- Social Darwinism
- Berlin Conference
- Shaka
- Boer
- Boer War

### USING YOUR NOTES

2. How did Europeans use Social Darwinism to justify empire building?

#### *The Scramble for Africa*

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### MAIN IDEAS

3. Why did the Europeans control such a small portion of Africa in the 1800s?
4. What were some of the internal factors that contributed to imperialism in Africa?
5. Why did the Boers and the British fight over southern Africa?

### CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **MAKING INFERENCES** What can you infer about the Europeans' attitude toward Africans from the Berlin Conference?
7. **FORMING OPINIONS** Why do you think Africans weren't interested in buying European products?
8. **DEVELOPING HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE** What sort of problems might result from combining or splitting groups of people without regard for ethnic or linguistic traditions?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **EMPIRE BUILDING** Write an **expository essay** explaining which European motive behind imperialism in Africa was the most powerful.

### INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY INTERNET ACTIVITY

Use the Internet to find out about the population and status of Afrikaners, or Boers, in South Africa today. Present your findings in an oral report.

#### INTERNET KEYWORD

*Afrikaners in South Africa*